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THE  
BOMBER
GIPSY 
BY   
A. P. HERBERT



95.

William Huse, Jr.

January 13, 1923.



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THE BOMBER GIPSY
AND OTHER POEMS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE SECRET BATTLE

THE
BOMBER GIPSY

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

A. P. HERBERT



NEW YORK
ALFRED A. KNOPF

1920



Stack
Annex

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THIRTY-FOUR of these pieces have already appeared in *Punch*, and I am indebted to the proprietors of that paper for their courtesy in permitting me to reprint them. "After the Battle" appeared in *The New Statesman*, and "The Atrocity" in *Queen Alexandra's Hospital Magazine*.

A. P. H.

June, 1919

2023905

TO MY WIFE
AND TO ALL THE WIVES
WHO HAVE WAITED AND WONDERED
BUT ESPECIALLY
TO THE WIVES OF THE R.N.D.

*You may not ride through magic regions
With fifty score companions near,
Or know the hope that lives in legions,
The fellowship that laughs at fear,
Or songs at sunset in the lovely haven
When with great cheers the teeming ships
set out—
Only the loneliness that makes men craven,
The silent furniture—the chill, dumb doubt.*

*But the swords flash, the cannon thunder
Full oft in your imaginings :
For you each night your man goes under,
And cursèd is the strife of Kings.
When lone winds wail, and cruel windows
rattle,
And empty chairs sit mocking round the
fire,
Too oft, I know, you sit and dream of battle,
Of blood and wounds and dead men on the
wire.*

viii. **THE BOMBER GIPSY**

*And when far back in warm green levels
He lies with all the restful host,
With dance and jest and midnight revels,
And Home is but a tavern toast,
For you the wind still howls about the sashes,
For you the regiments are relieved in vain :
You see no singers in the ruthless ashes,
Only the wet, the weariness, the pain.*

*Yet may you in this jester's pages
Be sure the battle sometimes ends,
Nor only death the soldier's wages,
But there are farms and laughing friends,
And wine and wonders and delicious leisures,
And dreaming villages where children dwell—
And if, mayhap, you cannot catch the pleasures,
Believe, at least, it is not always Hell.*

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THE BOMBER GIPSY
AND OTHER POEMS

THE BOMBER GIPSY

COME, let me tell the oft-told tale again

Of that strange Tyneside grenadier we had,
Whom none could quell or decently constrain,

For he was turbulent and sometimes bad ;
Yet, stout of heart, he dearly loved to fight,
And spoke his fellows on a gusty night

In some high barn, where, huddled in the
straw,

They watched the cheap wicks gutter on
the shelf,

How he was irked with discipline and law,

And would fare forth to battle by himself.

This said, he left them and returned no more ;

But whispers passed from Vimy to Verdun,
Where'er the fields ran thickliest with gore,

Of some stray bomber that belonged to
none,

But none more fierce or flung a fairer bomb,

Who ran unscathed the gamut of the Somme,

THE BOMBER GIPSY

And followed Freyberg up the Beaucourt mile,
With uncouth cries and streaming muddy
hair ;
But after, when they sought his name and
style
And would have honoured him—he was
not there.

For most he loved to lie upon Lorette
And, couched on cornflowers, gaze across
the lines
At Vimy's heights—we had not Vimy yet—
Pale Souchez's bones and Lens among the
mines,
The tall pit-towers and dusky heaps of slag,
Until, like eagles on the mountain-crag
By strangers stirred, with hoarse, indignant
shrieks
Gunnery emerged from some deep-delv'd
lair
To chase the intruder from their sacred peaks
And cast him down to Ablain St. Nazaire.

And rumour said he roamed the rearward
ways
In quiet seasons when no battle brewed ;
The transport, homing through the evening
haze,
Had seen and carried him, and given him
food ;

And he would leave them at Bethune canteen,
Or some hot drinking-house at Nœux-les-
Mines,

Where he would sit with wine and eggs and
bread

Till the swart minions of the A.P.M.

Stole in and called for him, but found him
fled

Out at the back. He was too much for them.

Too much. And surely thou shalt e'er be so ;

No hungry discipline shall starve thy soul ;
Shalt freely foot it where the poppies blow,

Shalt fight unfettered when the cannon
roll,

And haply, Wanderer, when the hosts go
home,

Thou only still in Aveluy shalt roam,

Shalt haunt the crumbled Windmill at Gavrelle

And fling thy bombs across the silent lea,

Drink with shy peasants at St. Catherine's
Well,

And in the dusk go home with them to tea.

BALLADE OF INCIPIENT LUNACY

Scene.—A Battalion “Orderly” Room in France during a period of “Rest.” Runners arrive breathlessly from all directions bearing illegible chits, and tear off in the same directions with illegible answers or no answers at all. Motor-bicycles snort up to the door, and arrogant despatch-riders enter with enormous envelopes containing leagues of correspondence, orders, minutes, circulars, maps, signals, lists, schedules, summaries, and all sorts. The tables are stacked with papers; the floor is littered with papers; papers fly through the air. Two typewriters click with maddening insistence in a corner. A signaller “buzzes” tenaciously at the telephone, talking in a strange language, apparently to himself, as he never seems to be connected with anyone else. A stream of miscellaneous persons — quartermasters, chaplains, generals, batmen, D.A.D.O.S.’s, sergeant-majors, staff officers, buglers, Maires,

BALLADE OF INCIPIENT LUNACY 5

officers just arriving, officers just going away, gas experts, bombing experts, interpreters, doctors—drifts in, wastes time, and drifts out again.

Clerks scribble ceaselessly, rolls and nominal rolls, nominal lists and lists. By the time they have finished one list it is long out of date. Then they start the next. Everything happens at the same time; nobody has time to finish a sentence. Only a military mind, with a very limited descriptive vocabulary and a chronic habit of self-deception, would call the place orderly.

The Adjutant speaks, hoarsely; while he speaks he writes, about something quite different. In the middle of each sentence his pipe goes out; at the end of each sentence he lights a match. He may or may not light his pipe; anyhow he speaks:—

“ WHERE is that list of Wesleyans I made ?

And what are all those people on the stair ?

Is that my pencil ? Well, they *can't* be paid.

Tell the Marines we have no forms to spare.

I cannot get these Ration States to square. The Brigadier is coming round, they say.

The Colonel wants a man to cut his hair.

I think I *must* be going mad to-day.

“These silly questions! I shall tell Brigade
 This Office is now closing for repair.
 They want to know what Mr. Johnstone
 weighed,
 And if the Armourer is dark or fair?
 I do not know; I cannot say I care.
 Tell that Interpreter to go away.
 Where is my signal-pad? I left it there.
 I think I *must* be going mad to-day.

“Perhaps I should appear upon parade.
 Where is my pencil? Ring up Captain
 Aire;
 Say I regret our tools have been mislaid.
 These companies would make Sir Douglas
 swear.
 ‘A’ is the worst. Oh, damn, is this the
Maire?
 I’m sorry, Monsieur—*je suis désolé*—
 But no one’s pinched your miserable chair.
 I think I *must* be going mad to-day.”

ENVOI

“Prince, I perceive what Cain’s temptations
 were,
 And how attractive it must be to slay.
 O Lord, the General! This is hard to bear.
 I think I *must* be going mad to-day.”

THE REST-RUMOUR

I KNOW not in what rodent-haunted caverns,
By what rough tongues the tale was first
expressed,
By choking fires or in the whispering taverns,
With wine and omelette lovingly caressed;
Or what tired soul, o'erladen with a
lump
Of bombs and bags which some one *had*
to hump,
Flung down his load indignant at the
Dump,
And, cursing, cried, "*It's time we had*
a rest!"

And so, maybe, began it. Some sly runner,
Half-hearing, half-imagining, no doubt,
Caught up the word and gave it to a gunner,
And, he embroidering, 'twas noised about
From lip to lip in many a trench's press,
Where working-parties struggled to pro-
gress
Or else go back, but both without success,
"*Officer says Division's going out.*"

It found the Front. It came up with the rations ;

The Corporals carried it from hole to hole ;
And scouts behaved in strange polemic fashions

On what they thought would be their last patrol ;

While Fritz, of course, from whom few things are hid,

Had the romance as soon as any did,

And said, thank William, he would soon be rid

Of yon condemned disturbers of his soul.

Nor were there few confirming little trifles,

For James, rejoining from the Base, had scann'd

Strange waiting infantry, with brand-new rifles,

In backward areas, but close at hand ;

And some had marked the D.A.Q.M.G.

Approaching Railhead in the dusk, and he (Who, as a fact, was simply on the spree)

Had gone, of course, to view the Promised Land.

And what a land ! Who had not heard its promise ?

A land of quietude and no grenades,
Soft beds for officers, fair barns for Tommies,

And rich *estaminets* and gracious maids,
And half an hour from Abbeville by the
train,
A land of rivulets and golden grain
(Where it would be impossible to train
And even difficult to have parades) !

Then it appeared the groom of General
Harrison

Had news denied to ordinary men,
How the Brigade was going home to garrison
A restful corner of the Lincoln fen ;
But weeks have passed, and we are as we
were ;
And possibly, when Peace is in the air
And these dear myths have died of sheer
despair,
They may come true—but not, I think,
till then.

A LOST LEADER

Or, Thoughts on Trek

THE men are marching like the best ;
The waggons wind across the lea ;
At ten to two we have a rest,
We have a rest at ten to three ;
I ride ahead upon my gee
And try to look serene and gay ;
The whole battalion follows me,
And I believe I've lost the way.

Full many a high-class thoroughfare
My erring map does not disclose,
While roads that are not really there
The same elaborately shows ;
And whether this is one of those
It needs a clever man to say ;
I am not clever, I suppose,
And I believe I've lost the way.

The soldiers sing about their beer ;
The wretched road goes on and on ;
There ought to be a turning here,
But if there was the thing has gone ;

Like some depressed automaton
I ask at each *estaminet* ;
They say, "*Tout droit,*" and I say "*Bon,*"
But I believe I've lost the way.

I dare not tell the trustful men ;
They think me wonderful and wise ;
But where will be the legend when
They get a shock of such a size ?
And what about our brave Allies ?
They wanted us to fight to-day ;
We were to be a big surprise—
And I believe I've lost the way.

THE INCORRIGIBLES

*How an exasperated Adjutant would LIKE to
address the New Guard*

“ GUARD ! for I still concede to you the
title,

Though well I know that it is not your due,
Being devoid of everything most vital

To the high charge which is imposed on
you ;

Listen awhile—and, Number Two, be dumb ;

Forbear to scratch the irritable tress ;

No longer masticate the furtive gum ;

And, Private Pitt, stop nibbling at your
thumb,

But for a change attend to my address.

“ Day after day I urge the old, old thesis—

To reverence well the man of martial note,
Nor treat as mere sartorial caprices

The mystic marks he carries on his coat ;

And how to know what everybody is,

The swords, the crowns, the purple-stained
cards,

The Brigadiers concealed in Burberries,
And render all those pomps and dignities
Which are, of course, the *raison d'être* of
guards.

“With what avail? for never a guard is
mounted
That does not do some wild abhorrent
thing,
Only in hushed low tones to be recounted,
Lest haply hints of it should reach the
King—

Dark ugly tales of sentinels who drank,
Or lost their prisoners while consuming tea,
Or took great pains to make their minds a
blank

Whene'er approached by gentlemen of rank,
And, when reprov'd, presented arms to
me!

“There is no potentate in France or Flanders
You will not heap with insult if you can.

For, lo! a car. It is the Corps Commander's ;

The sentries take no notice of the man,
Or fix him with a not unkindly stare,

And slap their butts in an engaging way,
Or else, too late, in penitent despair

Cry, ‘Guard, turn out!’ and there is no
guard there,

But they are in *The Blue Estaminet*.

“ Weary I am of worrying and warning ;
For all my toil I get it in the neck ;
I am fed up with it ; and from this morning
I shall not seek to keep your crimes in
check ;
Sin as you will—I shall but acquiesce ;
Sleep on, O sentinels—I shall not curse ;
And so, maybe, from sheer contrariness
Some day a guard may be a slight success ;
At any rate you cannot well do worse.”

AT THE DUMP

Lines to the N.C.O. in charge

Now is the hour of dusk and mist and midges,
Now the tired planes drone homeward
through the haze,
And distant wood-fires wink behind the
ridges,
And the first flare some timorous Hun
betrays ;
Now no shell circulates, but all men brood
Over their evening food ;
The bats flit warily, and owl and rat
With muffled cries their shadowy loves
pursue,
And pleasant, Corporal, it is to chat
In this hushed moment with a man like you.

How strange a spectacle of human passions
Is yours all day beside the Arras road,
What mournful men concerned about their
rations
When here at eve the limbers leave their
load ;

What twilight blasphemy, what horses' feet
 Entangled with the meat,
What sudden hush when that machine-gun
 sweeps,
And—flat as possible for men so round—
The Quartermasters may be seen in heaps,
 While you sit still and chuckle, I'll be
 bound !

Here all men halt awhile and tell their rumours ;
 Here the young runners come to cull your
 tales,
How Generals talked with you, in splendid
 humours,
 And how the Worcestershires have gone to
 Wales ;
Up yonder trench each lineward regiment
 swings,
 Saying some shocking things ;
And here at dark sad diggers stand in hordes
 Waiting the late elusive Engineer,
While glowing pipes illumine yon notice-boards
 That say, "NO LIGHTS. YOU MUST NOT
 LOITER HERE."

And you sit ruminant and take no action,
 But daylong watch the aeroplanes at play,
Or contemplate with secret satisfaction
 Your fellow-men proceeding towards the
 fray.

Your sole solicitude when men report
 There is a shovel short,
Or, numbering jealously your rusty store,
 Some mouldering rocket, some wet bomb you
 miss
That was reserved for some ensuing war,
 But on no grounds to be employed in this.

For Colonels cringe to you, most firm of
 warders,
 For sandbags suppliant, and do no good,
And high Staff Officers and priests in orders
 In vain beleaguer you for bits of wood,
While I, who have no signature nor chit,
 But badly want a bit,
I only talk to you of these high themes,
 Nor stoop to join the sycophantic choir,
Seeing (I trust) my wicked batman, Jeames,
 Has meanwhile pinched enough to light my
 fire.

THE BATTLE OF CODSON'S BEARD

I'LL tell you a yarn of a sailor-man, with a
face more fierce than fair,
Who got round that on the Navy's plan by
hiding it all with hair ;
He was one of a hard old sailor-breed, and
had lived his life at sea,
But he took to the beach at the nation's need,
and fought with the R.N.D.

Now Brigadier-General Blank's Brigade was
tidy and neat and trim,
And the sight of a beard on *his* parade was a
bit too much for him :
" What is that," said he, with a frightful oath,
" of all that is wild and weird ? "
And the Staff replied, " A curious growth, but
it looks very like a beard."

And the General said, " I have seen six wars,
and many a ghastly sight,
Fellows with locks that gave one shocks, and
buttons none too bright,

BATTLE OF CODSON'S BEARD 19

But never a man in *my* Brigade with a face
all fringed with fur ;
And you'll toddle away and shave to-day."
But Codson said, "*You err.*"

"For I don't go much on wars, as such, and
living with rats and worms,
And you ought to be glad of a sailor lad on
any old kind of terms ;
While this old beard of which you're skeered,
it stands for a lot to me,
For the great North gales, and the sharks and
whales, and the smell of the good grey
sea."

New Generals crowded to the spot and urged
him to behave,
But Codson said, "You talk a lot, but can
you *make* me shave ?
For the Navy allows a beard at the bows, and
a beard is the sign for me,
That the world may know wherever I go, I
belong to the King's Navee."

They gave him posts in distant parts where
few might see his face,
Town-Major jobs that break men's hearts,
and billets at the Base ;

THE BOMBER GIPSY

But whenever he knew a fight was due, he
hurried there by train,
And when he'd done for every Hun—they
sent him back again.

Then up and spake an old sailor, "It seems
you can't 'ave 'eared,
Begging your pardon, General Blank, the
reason of this same beard:
It's a kind of a sart of a *camyflarge*, and that
I take to mean
A thing as 'ides some other thing wot
oughtn't to be seen.

"And I've brought you this 'ere photergraph
of what 'e *used* to be
Before 'e stuck that fluffy muck about 'is
phyzogmy."
The General looked and, fainting, cried, "The
situation's grave!
The beard was bad, but, **KAMERAD!** he
simply must not shave!"

And now, when the thin lines bulge and sag,
and man goes down to man,
A great black beard like a pirate's flag flies
ever in the van;
And I've fought in many a warmish spot,
where death was the least men feared,
But I never knew anything quite so hot as
the Battle of Codson's Beard.

AFTER THE BATTLE

So they are satisfied with our Brigade,
And it remains to parcel out the bays !
And we shall have the usual Thanks Parade,
The beaming General, and the soapy praise.

You will come up in your capacious car
To find your heroes sulking in the rain,
To tell us how magnificent we are,
And how you hope we'll do the same again.

And we, who knew your old abusive tongue,
Who heard you hector us a week before,
We who have bled to boost you up a rung—
A K.C.B. perhaps, perhaps a Corps——

We who must mourn those spaces in the Mess,
And somehow fill those hollows in the heart,
We do not want your Sermon on Success,
Your greasy benisons on Being Smart.

We only want to take our wounds away
To some warm village where the tumult ends,
And drowsing in the sunshine many a day,
Forget our aches, forget that we had friends.

Weary we are of blood and noise and pain ;
This was a week we shall not soon forget ;
And if, indeed, we have to fight again,
We little wish to think about it yet.

We have done well ; we like to hear it said.
Say it, and then, for God's sake, say no
more.
Fight, if you must, fresh battles far ahead,
But keep them dark behind your chateau
door !

OPEN WARFARE

MEN said, " At last ! at last the open battle !
Now shall we fight unfettered o'er the plain,
No more in catacombs be cooped like cattle,
Nor travel always in a devious drain ! "
They were in ecstasies. But I was damping ;
I like a trench, I have no lives to spare ;
And in those catacombs, however cramping,
You did at least know vaguely where you
were.

Ah, happy days in deep well-ordered alleys,
Where, after dining, probably with wine,
One felt indifferent to hostile sallies,
And with a pipe meandered round the line ;
You trudged along a trench until it ended—
It led at least to some familiar spot—
It might not be the place that you'd intended,
But then you might as well be there as not.

But what a wilderness we now inhabit
Since this confounded " open " strife pre-
vails !
It may be good ; I do not wish to crab it,
But you should hear the language it entails—

Should see this waste of wide uncharted
craters

Where it is vain to seek the Companies,
Seeing the shell-holes are as like as taters
And no one knows where anybody is.

Oft in the darkness, palpitant and blowing,
Have I set out and lost the hang of things,
And ever thought, "Where *can* that guide be
going?"

But trusted long and rambled on in rings,
For ever mounting some tremendous summit,
And halting there to curse the contrite guide,
For ever then descending like a plummet
Into a chasm on the other side.

Oft have I sat and wept, or sought to study
With hopeless gaze the uninstruative stars,
Hopeless because the very skies were muddy—
I only saw a red malignant Mars :
Or pulled my little compass out and pondered,
And set it sadly on my shrapnel hat,
Which, I suppose, was why the needle
wandered,
Only, of course, I never thought of that.

And then, perhaps, some 5.9's start dropping,
As if there weren't sufficient holes about ;
I flounder on, hysterical and sopping,
And come by chance to where I started out,

And say once more, while I have no objection
To other men proceeding to Berlin,
Give *me* a trench, a nice revetted section,
And let me stay there till the Boche gives
in !

BEAUCOURT REVISITED

I WANDERED up to Beaucourt ; I took the river
track,
And saw the lines we lived in before the Boche
went back ;
But Peace was now in Pottage, the front was
far ahead,
The front had journeyed Eastward, and only
left the dead.

And I thought, How long we lay there, and
watched across the wire,
While the guns roared round the valley, and set
the skies afire !
But now there are homes in HAMEL and tents
in the Vale of Hell,
And a camp at Suicide Corner, where half a
regiment fell.

'The new troops follow after, and tread the land
we won,
To them 'tis so much hill-side re-wrested from
the Hun ;

We only walk with reverence this sullen mile of
mud ;
The shell-holes hold our history, and half of
them our blood.

Here, at the head of Peche Street, 'twas death
to show your face ;
To me it seemed like magic to linger in the
place ;
For me how many spirits hung round the
Kentish Caves,
But the new men see no spirits—they only see
the graves.

I found the half-dug ditches we fashioned for
the fight,
We lost a score of men there—young James was
killed that night ;
I saw the star shells staring, I heard the bullets
hail,
But the new troops pass unheeding—they
never heard the tale.

I crossed the blood-red ribbon, that once was
No-Man's Land,
I saw a misty daybreak and a creeping minute-
hand ;

And here the lads went over, and there was
Harmsworth shot,
And here was William lying—but the new men
know them not.

And I said, “ There is still the river, and still
the stiff, stark trees,
To treasure here our story, but there are only
these ” ;
But under the white wood crosses the dead men
answered low,
“ The new men know not BEAUCOURT, but we
are here—we know.”

THE INVESTITURE

BE silent, guns ! for Basil is invested,
And wheresoe'er the slaves of strife are
found
Let your grim offices be now arrested,
Nor the hot rifle shoot another round,
Nor the pale flarelights toss,
But for a space all devilry be barred,
While Mars hangs motionless in pleased
regard
And the hushed lines look West to Palace
Yard,
Where on his breast our King has pinned the
Cross.

Oft in the Mess have we rehearsed that
moment,
In old French farms have staged the Royal
Square,
Or in cool caves by Germans made at Beau-
mont,
Though there indeed we had no space to
spare,
So lifelike was it all.

And when King George (the Padre's hard
to beat
In that great role), surrounded by his suite,
Pinned on the cover of the potted meat,
The very Hippodrome had seemed too small.

Or we would act the homing of our Hector,
Flushed up with pride beneath the ancestral
fir,
The cheering rustics and the sweet old Rector,
Welcoming back "our brave parishioner";
And since the lad was shy
We made him get some simple phrases pat
To thank them for the Presentation Bat,
While Maud stood near (the Adjutant did
that),
So overcome that she could only sigh.

Ah! Basil, say our pageants were not wasted,
Not vain the Adjutant's laborious blush!
Was it to Maud this glowing morn you hasted
With yonder bauble in its bed of plush—
Or was it that Miss Blake?
Say not you faced, with ill-concealed
dismay,
Your thronging townsmen and had naught
to say,
Or from your King stepped tremblingly
away
With some one else's Order by mistake!

Surely you shamed us not! for all that
splendour
Can scarce have been more moving to the
heart
Than our glad rites, the Princess not so tender
As was myself, who always took that part;
I cannot think the King,
Nor gorgeous Lords, nor Officers of State,
Nor seedy people peering through the
gate,
Felt half so proud or so affectionate
As those far friends when *we* arranged the
thing.

THE ATROCITY

(The following lines have no personal reference, but are in principle, *mutatis mutandis*, of regrettably wide application.)

O God of War, is this the end ?
O Mars, who made the shameful Hun,
Is this the final shame you send
To show us we have nearly won ?
A thing that fairly takes the bun,
That turns our golden deeds to dross.
O Vimy Ridge and O Verdun—
The A.D.C. has got the Cross !

Because he caught a rotten chill,
Because he had to ring the bells,
And oft from some convenient hill
Distinctly heard the sound of shells ;
Because he was the son of swells,
Because he was compelled to doss
In quite indifferent hotels—
The A.D.C. has got the Cross !

He never saw the tiniest louse
 (Or thought the creature was a gnat),
But little jobs about the house
 Were what the lad was gallant at ;
 And since he made himself a mat
To wipe the boots of any boss,
 And since they like a man like that—
The A.D.C. has got the Cross.

Because he bought the right cigars,
 And last December got wet through,
And had to drive in draughty cars,
 And speak when he was spoken to,
 And soon perceived it wasn't true
That rolling logs collect no moss,
 And stuck to generals like glue—
The A.D.C. has got the Cross !

O hero hosts who bleed and sweat,
 Whose names the King will never ken,
Be calm ; you may be butlers yet—
 Two mentions per six hundred men
 Must satisfy your souls till then ;
And why should soldiers care a toss
 For all the medals minted, when
The A.D.C. has got the Cross ?

THE BALLAD OF JONES'S BLIGHTY

THERE are some men who dwell for years
 Within the battle's hem,
Almost impervious, it appears,
 To shot or stratagem ;
Some well-intentioned sprite contrives
By hook or crook to save their lives
(It also keeps them from their wives),
 And Jones was one of them.

The hugest bolts of Messrs. Krupp
 Hissed harmless through his hair ;
The Boche might blow his billet up,
 But he would be elsewhere ;
And if with soul-destroying thud
A monstrous Minnie hit the mud,
The thing was sure to be a dud
 If only Jones was there.

Men envied him his scathless skin,
 But he deplored the fact,
And day by day, from sheer chagrin,
 He did some dangerous act ;

THE BALLAD OF JONES'S BLIGHTY 35

He slew innumerable Huns,
He captured towns, he captured guns :
His friends went home with Blighty ones,
But he remained intact.

We had a horse of antique shape,
Meek and of mellowed age,
And, after some unique escape,
Which made him mad with rage,
On this grave steed Jones rode away ;
They bore him back at break of day,
And Jones is now with Mrs. J——,
The convalescent stage.

The world observed the chance was droll
That sent so mild a hack
To smite the invulnerable soul
Whom William could not whack ;
But spiteful folk remarked, of course,
He must have used terrific force
Before he got that wretched horse
To throw him off its back.

THE TRENCH CODE

AH! with what awe, what infantile impatience,
We eyed the artifice when issued out,
And racked our brains about the Regulations,
And tried to think we had them free from
doubt,
As Rome's old Fathers, reverently leaning
In secret cellars o'er the Sibyl's strain,
Beyond the fact that several pars
Had something vague to do with Mars,
Failed, as a rule, to find the smallest meaning,
But told the plebs the oracle was plain!

So did we study it, ourselves deceiving,
In hope to say, "We have no rations here,"
Or "Please, Brigade, this regiment wants
relieving,"
And "Thank you for the bombs—but why
no beer?"
And wondered always, with a hint of presage,
Since never a word emerged as it was
planned,
If it was Hermes, Lord of Craft,
Compiled the code, or some one daft,
So that no mortal could compose a message
Which anybody else could understand.

Too soon the Staff, to spoil our tiny slumbers,
Or, as they said, to certify our skill,
Sent us a screed, all signs and magic numbers,
And what it signified is mystery still.

We flung them back a message yet more mazy,
To say we weren't unravelling their own,
And marked it *Urgent*, and designed
That it should reach them while they
dined.

All night they toiled, till half the crowd were
crazy,
And bade us breathe its burthen o'er the
'phone.

.

But now they want it back—*and it is missing!*
And shall one patriot heart withhold a
throb?

For four high officers have been here, hissing,
And plainly panicky about their job.

I know they think some dark, deluded bandit
Has gone and given it to Kaiser Bill;

But though I'm grieved the General's
cross,

I have no qualms about the loss—

If clever men like us can't understand it,

I don't suppose the Wilhelmstrasse will!

THE HUMILIATION OF THE PALFREY

WHERE is she now, the pride of the battalion,
That ambled always at the Colonel's side,
A fair white steed, like some majestic galleon
Which takes deliberate the harbour tide,
So soft, so slow, she scarcely seems to
stir ?

And that, indeed, was very true of her
Who was till late, so kind her character,
The only horse the Adjutant could ride.

Ever she led the regiment on its journeys
And held sweet converse with the Colonel's
gee,
Of knights, no doubt, and old heroic tourneys,
And how she bare great ladies o'er the lea ;
And on high hill-sides, when the men felt
dead,
Far up the height they viewed her at the
head,
A star of hope, and shook themselves, and
said,
" If she can do it, dammit, so can we ! "

HUMILIATION OF THE PALFREY 39

But she was old, my Adjutantal palfrey.

In front no longer but in rear to-day,
Behind the bicycles, and not at all free
To be familiar with the General's grey,
She walks in shame with all those misanthropes,
The sad pack-animals who have no hopes,
But must by men be led about on ropes,
Condemned till death to carry S.A.A.,

And bombs, and beef, and officers' valises ;

And I at eve have marked my wistful mare
By thronging dumps where cursing never
ceases

And rations come, for oft she brings them
there,

Patient, aloof ; and when the shrapnel
dropp'd

And the young mules complained and
kicked and hopp'd,

She only stood unmoved, with one leg
propp'd,

As if she heard it not or did not care ;

Or heard, maybe, but hoped to get a Blighty ;

For on her past she lately seemed to brood,
And dreamed herself once more among the
mighty,

By grooms beloved and reverently shoed ;

But now she has no standing in the corps,
And Death itself would hardly be a bore,
Save that, although she carries me no
more,

'Tis something still to carry up my food.

“ THE CHAIN OF RESPONSIBILITY ”

(“ These, aided by their staffs and assistants, convey his will to . . . subordinates under them, each of whom carries it down still lower, until eventually all ranks are controlled by it.”—*Field Service Regulations*.)

ALL night the tempest howled about the
camp,
And through the tent flaps filtered in the
damp.

The Brigadier woke up and saw no sun ;
His eggs were cold ; his bacon was not done ;
And, to express his reasonable pique
At being born into a world so bleak,
He spake as tartly as a General can
To Major Thingummy, his right-hand man ;
Who, well aware no negligence of his
Deserved just then these high-toned blas-
phemies,
Took horse and galloped with a heart in flame
Till he encountered Colonel Whatshisname ;
To whom in terms not reverent but frank,
Such as to persons of superior rank,
But not upon the Staff, the Staff may use,
The Major stingingly expressed his views

On how the Colonel or his dastard force
Had for a week possessed an extra horse.
The Colonel, lamb-like, heard the harsh critique
(He simply could not trust himself to speak),
But, spurring home, not lamb-like in the least,
Addressed his Adjutant about the beast ;
Who, hushed and hurt, confessed the horrid
 crime
(But knew his chief had known it all the
 time),
Went out and sought for somebody to err,
And found, of course, the Transport Officer,
A happy person, who from day to day
Did all his duties in the wrongest way—
Yet, gentle youth, however wild his whim,
Not often people could be cross with him.
But, in this case, so mortified his mind,
'The Adjutant was *pleased* to be unkind.
'The astonished victim, on the hallowed plan,
Relieved his feelings on the nearest man,
And duly visited with words of doom
An unattractive but contented groom,
With tuneful sibilance and studious care
Engaged in polishing the surplus mare ;
His whistle finished, and with needless force
He raised his boot and kicked the smiling
 horse
Under the belly—and it smiled no more . . .
And one more day was added to the War.

TO THE REGIMENT

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

So Christmas comes and finds you yet in
Flanders,
And all is mud and messiness and sleet,
And men have temperatures and horses
glanders,
And Brigadiers have trouble with their
feet,
And life is bad for Company-Commanders,
And even Thomas's is not so sweet.

Now cooks for kindle-wood would give great
riches,
And in the dixies the pale stew congeals,
And ration-parties are not free from hitches,
But all night circle like performing seals,
Till morning breaks and everybody pitches
Into a hole some other person's meals.

Now regiments huddle over last week's ashes,
And pray for coal and sedulously "rest"

Where rain and wind contemn the empty
sashes,
And blue lips frame the faint heroic jest,
Till some near howitzer goes off and smashes
The only window that the town possessed.

The lean mule strains, the limbers lip
crevasses,
And roads are black with cookers in the
ditch ;
And men sleep warmer who sleep in masses,
And peers confess the not inglorious itch,
Or get, like teeth, extracted from morasses—
Nor could their Ma's distinguish which is
which.

Yet somehow Christmas in your souls is
stirring,
And Colonels now less viciously upbraid
Their Transport Officers, however erring,
And sudden signals issue from Brigade
To say next Tuesday Christmas is occurring,
And what arrangements have Battalions
made ?

And then, maybe, while every one discusses
On what rich foods their dear commands
shall dine,
And (most efficiently) the Padre fusses
About the birds, the speeches, and the wine,

The Corps Commander sends a crowd of buses
To whisk you off to Christmas in the line.

You make no moan, nor hint at how you're
faring,
And here in turn we try to hide our woe,
With taxis mutinous, and Tubes so wearing,
And who can tell where all the matches go ?
And all our doors and windows want re-
pairing,
But can we get a man to mend them ?
No.

The dustman visits not ; we can't get castor ;
In vain are parlour-maids and plumbers
sought ;
And human intellect can scarcely master
The time when beer may lawfully be
bought,
Or calculate how cash can go much faster,
And if one's butcher's acting as he ought.

Our old indulgences are now not cricket ;
Whate'er one does *some* Minister will cuss ;
In Tube and Tram young ladies punch one's
ticket,
With whom one can't be cross or querulous ;
All things are different, but still we stick it,
And humbly hope we help a little thus.

So, Fellow-sufferers, we give you greeting—
All luck, all laughter, and an end of wars !
And just to strengthen you for Fritz's beating,
I'm sending out a parcel from the Stores ;
They mean to stop my annual over-eating,
But it will comfort me to think of yours.

ZERO

*(“ Zero-hour ”—commonly known as “ Zero ”
—is the hour fixed for the opening of an Infantry
attack.)*

I WOKE at dawn and flung the window wide.

Behind the hedge the lazy river ran ;
The dusky barges idled down the tide ;

In the laburnum tree the birds began ;
And it was May, and half the world in flower ;

I saw the sun creep over an Eastward
brow,

And thought, “ It may be, this is Zero-
hour ;

Somewhere the lads are ‘ going over ’
now.”

Somewhere the guns speak sudden on the
height,

And build for miles their battlement of
fire ;

Somewhere the men that shivered all the
night

Peer anxious forth and scramble through the
wire,

Swarm slowly out to where the Maxims bark,
And green and red the panic rockets rise ;
And Hell is loosed, and shyly sings a lark,
And the red sun climbs sadly up the skies.

Now they have won some sepulchred Gav-
relle,
Some shattered homes in their own dust
concealed ;
Now no Boche troubles them or any shell,
But almost quiet holds the thankful field,
While men draw breath, and down the Arras
road
Come the slow mules with battle's dreary
stores,
And there is time to see the wounded stowed,
And stretcher-squads besiege the doctors'
doors.

Then belches Hell anew. And all day long
The afflicted place drifts heavenward in dust,
All day the shells shriek out their devils' song,
All day men cling close to the earth's charred
crust,
Till, in the dusk, the Huns come on again,
And, like some sluice, the watchers up the
hill
Let loose the guns and flood the soil with slain,
And they go back, but scourge the village
still.

I see it all. I see the same brave souls
To-night, to-morrow, though the half be
gone,
Deafened and dazed, and hunted from their
holes,
Helpless and hunger-sick, but holding on ;
I shall be happy all to-morrow here,
But not till night shall they go up the steep,
And, nervous now because the end is near,
Totter at last to quietness and to sleep.

And men who find it easier to forget
In England here, among the daffodils,
That Eastward there are fields unflowered
yet,
And murderous May-days on the unlovely
hills—
Let them go walking where the land is fair,
And watch the breaking of a morn in May,
And think, "It may be Zero over there,"
But here is Peace"—and kneel awhile,
and pray.

THE MISCHIEF-MAKERS

Ah me! how peaceful was the sector,
How like a home these trenches were,
Where never a Hun would hate or hector,
And only swallows cleft the air ;
Where always poppies blew above the lines,
And little mice ran shyly through the corn ;
Where food was frequent, with expensive
wines,
And Sam Browne belts were worn.

And if through some ingenious crevice
We marked a head of hostile type,
We neither harassed him with " heavies " "
Nor fired our telescopic hyp. ;
But rather, like some rare and precious prize,
Preserved the man, and showed him to the
Staff,
Who looked at him with large, important eyes,
But did no sort of strafe.

And he, detecting any Tommies,
Regarded them with some disdain,
But seldom spoiled their youthful promise,
Nor caused them any needless pain ;

While, if at night inimical patrols

By some mischance came sudden face to face
They glowered fiercely from adjacent holes,
But nothing else took place.

And then, from some polemic quarter,

Some very earnest camp in Kent,
Came out, alack ! a baleful Mortar,
With crowds of men on murder bent ;
Radiant they came because the drills were
done,
With stacks of shells and valour all too
vast—

They only longed to load their blessed gun
And let it off at last.

We told them how the Hun was purring,

But would not be if they began ;
We said their shells, however erring,
Were certain to annoy the man ;
We showed them spots more worthy of their
arts
Far on the flank or far away in rear ;
We said they swarmed in other people's parts,
But there were none just here.

But it was vain. With grieved impatience
They hid themselves in some huge trough,
Interred their gun with incantations,
And madly loosed the monster off.

Straight on the sound, while yet the great
 bomb boomed,
 Five awful Minnies whistled down the
 wind,
And men for miles immediately assumed
 A hostile frame of mind.

Observers woke and peered through prisms,
 And every sort of specialist
Produced his hideous mechanisms,
 And made it penal to exist.
The sniper snipes, impervious to appeals,
 Immense projectiles hurtle to and from,
And no one now can count upon his meals—
 Even the bombers bomb.

It may be they will one day leave us—
 Their stock of shells may sometimes cease,
And this charred region, now so grievous,
 May see some slight return of peace ;
But never quite can hate be banished hence,
 'Twill never be the old good-natured zone,
Where war was war, but people had some
 sense—
 The place has lost its tone.

THE ROMANCERS

(*The New Statesman* complains that War Correspondents are not sufficiently realistic.)

AH ! no, you hardly catch the thunder,
But still in that familiar mode,
Reiterate with childlike wonder
That guns go off and shells explode ;
Still simple seem, as penned in your report,
These desperate movements of a million
men,
As who should say, " They got in at Earl's
Court,
And came to High Street, Ken."

We weary of that land of banter
Where armies dwell in one long purr,
When not assaulting, at the canter,
By methods which can scarcely err ;
We do not share your manifest surprise
That wounded men, receding from the fray,
Should not come down with sorrow in their
eyes
But be a little gay ;

We want to hear of human terrors,
 The tactics which turned out a frost,
 The men who made enormous errors,
 The working-parties nobly lost :
 Tell us of rations which did not arrive,
 Of cookers ditched and mules that are no
 more,
 And let us think *one* Boche is still alive
 To carry on the war.

We want to hear the homely details
 Of how men wash in shrapnel-hats,
 The kind of beer the Frenchman retails
 And what they do about the rats,
 And not those super-myths, the " boys " who
 bask
 In seas of shells or frolic in the mud,
 And, at the end, invariably ask
 For further deeds of blood.

And yet, as your romances worsen
 I do not hold you most to blame,
 For that imaginative person,
 The British private, makes the same ;
 And when I read how proud you were to speak
 " With certain units resting in their barns,"
 I seem to see them, every tongue in cheek,
 Filling you up with yarns.

“ AT DAWN ”

'E WASN'T like us lucky ones
'Oo thinks of nothing much but beer,
Though 'e was mad to meet the 'Uns
(They always is until they're 'ere) ;
It's 'ard to think of 'ow e's gorn,
And 'ow I've joked with Bill and 'im
About us getting shot at dorn,
And now it's 'appened—and to Jim !

There's some as can't 'elp feeling fear,
And some as don't know what it is,
And why *they* get the Cross out 'ere
Is one of Gawd's own mysteries ;
And 'ow 'e stuck it as 'e did
But never 'ad a smell of such :
'E was as keen as any kid,
But 'e imagined things too much.

And when it came to stunts—'e ran,
And chucked away 'is blooming life.
They say 'e took it like a man,
But that don't seem to 'elp 'is wife :

She might 'ave dreamed 'er soldier-lad
'Ad copped a packet full of pride
Like 'arf the regiment, fighting mad—
But Gawd ! they've told 'er 'ow 'e died.

PATROLS

The Scout Officer soliloquizes :—

THE lights begin to leap along the lines,
Leap up and hang and swoop and sputter
out ;
A bullet hits a wiring-post and whines ;
I wish to God that I was not a Scout !

How fair it seemed in far-off Dorset days
To leave my envious fellows at their
drill,
To seek adventure in the forest ways,
And follow footsteps over Badbury Hill ;

Or in a fight to spy upon the foe
With reckless courage from the oak-tree's
heart,
To stalk some sentinel and lay him low,
Or slip past pickets in the grocer's cart !

Ah! those were days. And then I loved the
trade ;

Far other is this battle in the waste,
Wherein, each night, though not of course
afraid,

I wriggle round with ill-concealed distaste ;

Where who can say what menace is not nigh,
What ambushed foe, what unexploded
crump,

And the glad worm, aspiring to the sky,
Emerges suddenly and makes you jump.

Where either all is still—so still one feels
That something huge must presently ex-
plode—

And back, far back, is heard the noise of
wheels

From Prussian waggons on the Douai road ;

And flares shoot upward with a startling hiss
And fall, and flame intolerably close,

So that it seems no living man could miss—

How huge my head must look, my legs how
gross !—

Or the live air is full of droning hums

And cracking whips and whispering snakes
of fire.

And a loud buzz of conversation comes

From Simpson's party putting out some wire ;

Or else—as when some soloist is done
And the hushed orchestra may now begin—
A sudden rage inflames the placid Hun
And scouts lie naked in a world of din.

The sullen bomb dissolves in singing shapes ;
The whizz-bang jostles it—too fast to flee ;
Machine-guns chatter like demented apes—
And, goodness, can it *all* be meant for me ?

It can and is. And such are small affairs
Compared with Tompkins and his Lewis
gun,
Or eager folk who play about with flares,
And, like as not, mistake me for a Hun ;

Compared with when some gunner, having
dined,
To show his guest the glories of his art
“ Poops off a round or two,” which burst
behind,
But fail to drown the beating of my heart.

Sweet to all soldiers is the rearward view ;
To infanters how grand the gunners' case !
And I suppose men pine at G.H.Q.
For the rich ease of people at the Base.

To me is sweet this mean and noisome ditch,
When on my belly I must issue out
Into the night, inscrutable as pitch—
I wish to God that I was not a Scout!

THE DESERTERS

WHERE are the maids that used to lay my
table,
And cook my meals and (sometimes) scrub
the floor ?
Florrie and Maud and Emily and Mabel,
All, all are gone to prosecute the war :
In reeking vaults and mountain dells
They tend their sheep or fill their
shells,
While my wife answers all the bells,
And no one shines my Sam Browne any
more.

Where is Elizabeth, whose eyes were argent ?
Ah, what a home *her* hospital must be !
Winnie's a " Waac," and bound to be a
Sergeant
Judging from how she dominated me
(Only I hope she never stoops
To talk like that to Lady troops) ;
And Maud, who dropped so many soups,
What does she do with bombs and T.N.T. ?

Our car stands starving in the dusty garage,
But Mabel drives a whacking limousine ;
And when they sprinkle us with bits of
barrage,
We know that much of it was made by
Jean.
Our income slowly disappears,
While they get more than Brigadiers—
No wonder now the agent sneers,
“ You *can't* get girls to come to Turnham
Green ! ”

Do they look back, and hope that we are
happy,
With no one left to fuss about our food,
And when some foreman is extremely snappy,
Recall with tears my courtlier attitude ?
Rather, I ween, with mirthful hoots
They think of Master cleaning boots,
And thank their stars, the little brutes !
They bear no more the yoke of housemaid-
hood.

And what will happen when the Boche goes
under,
And all these women fling their swords
away ?
Will the dear maids come back to us, I
wonder ?
Shall I be able to afford their pay ?

And will they want Munition rates ?
Ah, who can read the ruthless Fates ?—
Meanwhile, we wash the dirty plates,
And do our whack as willingly as they.

FREE MEALS

WHEN William had not crossed the Rhine
And food could still be found,
How often did we all decline,
If some one asked us out to dine,
Upon the smallest ground !
Because his talk was imbecile,
Because his face was plain,
One used to miss the loveliest meal
And not get asked again.

Less oft to-day do men endow
Their famished friends with food ;
Free dinners are free dinners now,
And to refuse, as all allow,
Is rather mad than rude ;
While prudent folk, with frank delight,
Both indigent and rich,
When asked to " Come and dine some night,"
Make answer, " Thank you ; *which ?* "

My old friend Hubert, like some bee,
From host to host doth flit
For dinner, lunch, and even tea
(I do believe he'd breakfast free
If he could manage it) ;

Till, having drained all other flowers
And reached an anxious point,
He flies to Streatham and devours
His Aunt Jane's Sunday joint.

In olden days he only knew
Those in the social swim,
But now he takes a broader view
And feeds with all (though very few
Have ever fed with him) ;
Only, I think, he has a doubt,
Only the world looks grey,
When different people ask him out
To dinner on one day.

And surely thus shall strife conclude
When rations get so small
That peers with peasantry have chewed,
And men are glad to take their food
With anyone at all ;
Though, at the worst, I don't expect
The War will thus be done ;
A starving world would still object
To eating with the Hun.

THE WAR-DREAM

I wish I did not dream of France,
And spend my nights in mortal dread
On miry flats where whizz-bangs dance
And star-shells hover o'er my head,
And sometimes wake my anxious spouse
By making shrill excited rows
Because it seems a hundred "hows"
Are barraging the bed.

I never fight with tigers now
Or know the old nocturnal mares—
The house on fire, the frantic cow,
The cut-throat coming up the stairs
Would be a treat ; I almost miss
That feeling of paralysis
With which one climbed a precipice,
Or ran away from bears.

Nor do I dream the pleasant days
That sometimes soothe the worst of wars,
Of omelettes and estaminets
And smiling maids at cottage doors ;

But in a vague unbounded waste
For ever hide with futile haste
From 5.9's precisely placed,
 And all the time it pours.

Yet, if I showed colossal phlegm,
Or kept enormous crowds at bay,
And sometimes won the D.C.M.,
 It might inspire me for the fray ;
But, looking back, I do not seem
To recollect a single dream
In which I did not simply scream
 And try to run away.

And when I wake with flesh that creeps,
 The only solace I can see
Is thinking, if the Prussian sleeps,
 What hideous visions *his* must be !
Can all my dreams of gore and guns
Be half as rotten as the Hun's ?
I like to think his blackest ones
 Are when he dreams of me.

THE PASSING OF THE COD'S HEAD

(A Romance of Chiswick Mall.)

It was because the dustman did not come ;
It was because our cat was overfed,
And, gorged with some superior pabulum,
Declined to touch the cod's disgusting head.
It was because the weather was too warm
To hide the horror in the refuse-bin,
And too intense the perfume of its form,
My wife commanded me to do the sin,
To take and cast it in the twinkling Thames—
A practice which the neighbourhood con-
demns.

So on the midnight, with a strong cigar
And scented handkerchief, I tiptoed near,
But felt the exotic fragrance from afar ;
I thought of Arthur and Sir Bedivere :
And it seemed best to leave it on the plate,
So strode I back and told my curious spouse,
“ I heard the high tide lap along the Eyot,
And the wild water at the barges' bows.”
She said, “ O treacherous ! O heart of clay !
Go back and throw the smelly thing away.”

PASSING OF THE COD'S HEAD 69

Thereat I seized it, and with guilty shoon
Stole out indignant to the water's marge ;
Its eyes like emeralds caught the affronted
moon ;

The stars conspired to make the thing look
large ;

Surely all Chiswick would perceive my shame !

I clutched the indecency and whirled it round
And flung it from me like a torch in flame,

And a great wailing swept across the sound,
As though the deep were calling back its kith.

I said, " It will go down to Hammersmith ;

" It will go down beyond the Chelsea flats,

And hang with barges under Battersea,

Will press past Wapping with decaying cats,

And the dead dog shall bear it company ;

Small bathing boys shall feel its clammy prod,

And think some jelly-fish has fled the surge ;

And so 'twill win to where the tribe of cod

In its own ooze intones a fitting dirge,

And after that some false and impious fish

Will likely have it for a breakfast dish."

The morning dawned. The tide had stripped
the shore,

And that foul shape I fancied so remote

Lay stark below, just opposite next door !

Who would have said a cod's head could not
float ?

No more my neighbour in his garden sits ;
My callers now regard the view with groans ;
For tides may roll and rot the fleshly bits,
But what shall mortify those ageless bones ?
How shall I bear to hear my grandsons say,
“ Look at the fish that Granddad threw away ” ?

THE HELLES HOTEL

WHEN I consider how my life is spent
In this dark world of sugar-cards and queues,
Where none but babes get proper nourishment
And meanly men remunerate the Muse,
I dream of holidays when Peace is sent,
But not such dreams as common persons
use—

I know a headland at the Dardanelles
Where I shall build the best of all hotels.

I know a cliff-top where the wealthy guest
From languid balconies shall each day view
Far over Samothrace the tired sun rest
And melt, a marvel, into Europe's blue,
To come back blushing out of Asia's breast
And hang, at noon, divided 'twixt the two,
While shuttered casements looking out to Troy
Shall faintly stimulate the Fifth-Form boy.

There shall they have, with those delicious skies,
All that rich ease for which the Armies prayed,
Nor dust nor drought nor shortage of supplies,
But long cool glasses in the cypress' shade,
And starlight suppers, and, of course, no flies,
And in their bathing-place no mules decayed ;
Shall swim in the Ægean, if they want,
Or go and do it in the Hellespont.

There shall they hear from olives overhead
The cricket call to them and no shells sing,
While painted lizards flash before their tread
And in green gullies trills the sudden Spring ;
Shall walk, unblinded by disease and dread,
Where myrtle beckons and rock-roses cling,
And find it difficult to tell their aunts
The proper names of all these funny plants.

There shall they see across the storied Sound
Some snow-peak glisten like a muffled star,
And murmur, " That's Olympus, I'll be bound,"
And tread old battle-fields where vineyards
are ;
With scarred young veterans they'll amble
round
The Turks' entanglements at Sedd-el-Bahr,
And practise at a reasonable charge
Heroic landings in the hotel barge.

But there are dates when tourists shall be
banned,
High dates of April and of early June,
When only they that bear the Helles brand,
A few tired Captains and the Tenth Platoon,
Shall see strange shadows in that flowery land
And ghostly cruisers underneath the moon :
They only then shall scale the sunny hills,
And they alone shall have no heavy bills.

DEAD-MULE TREE

A SONG OF WISDOM

It's a long step round by the Crucifix for a
man with a mighty load,
But there's hell to pay where the dead mule
lies if you go by the Bailleul road,
Where the great shells sport like an angry
child with a litter of broken bricks,
*So we don't go down by the Dead-Mule Tree,
but round by the Crucifix.*

But the wild young men come bubbling out
and look for an early grave ;
They light their pipes on the parapet edge and
think they're being brave ;
They take no heed of the golden rules that the
long, long years have taught,
*And they WILL go down by the Dead-Mule
Tree when they know that nobody ought.*

And some of us old ones feel some days that
life is a tiring thing,
And we show our heads in the same place twice,
we stand in a trench and sing ;

We lark about like a kid just out and shatter
a hundred rules,

*But we never go down by the Dead-Mule Tree,
we aren't such perfect fools.*

And the War goes on and the men go down,
and, be he young or old,

An English man with an English gun is worth
his weight in gold,

And I hate to think of the fine young lads who
laughed at you and me—

*Who wouldn't go round by the Crucifix but died
at the Dead-Mule Tree.*

THE COOKERS

A SONG OF THE TRANSPORT

THE Officers' kit and the long low limbers,
The Maltese cart and the mules go by
With a sparkle of paint and speckless timbers,
With a glitter of steel to catch the eye ;
But the things I like are the four black chimneys
And the smoke-tails scattering down the
wind,
For these are the Cookers, the Company
Cookers,
The cosy old Cookers that crawl behind.

The Company Cooks are mired and messy,
Their cheeks are black but their boots are
not ;
The Colonel says they must be more dressy,
And the General says he'll have them shot ;
They hang their packs on the four black
chimneys,
They're a grubby disgrace, but *we* don't
mind
As long as the Cookers, the jolly black Cookers,
The filthy old Cookers are close behind.

For it's only the Cooks can make us perky
When the road is rainy and cold and steep,
When the songs die down and the step gets
jerky,
And the Adjutant's horse is fast asleep ;
And it's bad to look back for the four black
chimneys
But never a feather of smoke to find,
For it means that the Cookers, the crazy old
Cookers,
The rickety Cookers are *ditched* behind.

The Company Cook is no great fighter
And there's never a medal for *him* to wear,
Though he camps in the shell-swept waste,
poor blighter,
And many a Cook has " copped it " there ;
But the boys go over on beans and bacon,
And Tommy is best when Tommy has dined,
So here's to the Cookers, the plucky old Cookers,
And the sooty old Cooks that waddle behind.

THE GERMAN GRAVES

I WONDER are there roses still
In Ablain St. Nazaire,
And crosses girt with daffodil
In that old garden there.
I wonder if the long grass waves
With wild-flowers just the same
Where Germans made their soldiers' graves
Before the English came ?

The English set those crosses straight
And kept the legends clean ;
The English made the wicket-gate
And left the garden green ;
And now who knows what regiments dwell
In Ablain St. Nazaire ?
But I would have them guard as well
The graves we guarded there.

So do not tear those fences up
And drive your waggons through,
Or trample rose and buttercup
As careless feet may do ;

For I have friends where Germans tread
 In graves across the line,
And as I do towards their dead
 So may they do to mine.

And when at last the Prussians pass
 Among those mounds and see
The reverent cornflowers crowd the grass
 Because of you and me,
They'll give perhaps one humble thought
 To all the "English fools"
Who fought as never men have fought
 But somehow kept the rules.

THE WINDMILL

A SONG OF VICTORY

YES, it was all like a garden glowing
When first we came to the hill-top there,
And we laughed to know that the Bosch was
going,
And laughed to know that the land was fair ;
Acre by acre of green fields sleeping,
Hamlets hid in the tufts of wood,
And out of the trees were church-towers
peeping,
And away on a hillock the Windmill stood.

*Then, ah, then, 'twas a land worth winning,
And now there is naught but the naked
clay,
But I can remember the Windmill spin-
ning,
And the four sails shone in the sun that
day.*

But the guns came after and tore the hedges
And stripped the spinneys and churned the
plain,
And a man walks now on the windy ledges,
And looks for a feather of green in vain ;

Acre by acre the sad eye traces
The rust-red bones of the earth laid bare,
And the sign-posts stand in the market-places
To say that a village was builded there.

*But better the French fields stark and
dying
Than ripe for a conqueror's fat content,
And I can remember the mill-sails flying,
Yet I cheered with the rest when the
Windmill went.*

Away to the east the grass-land surges
Acre by acre across the line,
And we must go on till the end like scourges,
Though the wilderness stretch from sea to
Rhine ;
But I dream some days of a great reveille,
When the buds shall burst in the Blasted
Wood,
And the children chatter in Death-Trap Alley,
And a windmill stand where the Windmill
stood.

*And we that remember the Windmill
spinning,
We may go under, but not in vain,
For our sons shall come in the new begin-
ning
And see that the Windmill spins again.*

THE GREEN ESTAMINET

THE old men sit by the chimney-piece and drink
the good red wine
And tell great tales of the *Soixante-Dix* to the
men from the English line,
And Madame sits in her old arm-chair and sighs
to herself all day—
*So Madeleine serves the soldiers in the Green
Estaminet.*

For Madame wishes the War was won and speaks
of a strange disease,
And Pierre is somewhere about Verdun, and
Albert on the seas ;
Le Patron, 'e is soldat too, but long time *prison-
nier*—
*So Madeleine serves the soldiers in the Green
Estaminet.*

She creeps downstairs when the black dawn
seowls and helps at a neighbour's plough,
She rakes the midden and feeds the fowls and
milks the lonely cow,
She mends the holes in the Padre's clothes and
keeps his billet gay—
*And she also serves the soldiers in the Green
Estaminet.*

The smoke grows thick and the wine flows free
and the great round songs begin,
And Madeleine sings in her heart, maybe, and
welcomes the whole world in ;
But I know that life is a hard, hard thing, and
I know that her lips look grey,
*Though she smiles as she serves the soldiers in the
Green Estaminet.*

But many a tired young English lad has learned
his lesson there,
To smile and sing when the world looks bad,
“*for, Monsieur, c'est la guerre.*”
Has drunk her honour and made his vow to
fight in the same good way
*That Madeleine serves the soldiers in the Green
Estaminet.*

A big shell came on a windy night, and half of
the old house went,
But half of the old house stands upright, and
Mademoiselle's content ;
The shells still fall in the Square sometimes,
but Madeleine means to stay,
*So Madeleine serves the soldiers still in the
Green Estaminet.*

COUVRONS

AUGUSTUS was a plucky little thing,
But so ill-made for purposes of war
That never a crisis could persuade the KING
To put him into any kind of corps ;
So, failing sadly to unsheathe the sword,
He got a billet on the Drainage Board.

The years rolled by. His friends received
V.C.'s,
And D.S.O.'s, and multitudes of Bars,
And all their clothes were covered by degrees
With braid and badge, with chevrons and
with stars ;
The only wear that showed what *he* had done
Were two twin elbows shining in the sun.

And then the coupons came ; but he used none,
For always in his other coat they lay,
Or else he had not heart to squander one,
And, when he had, all meatless was the day—
A common tale, but this is what is sad,
That in this case it drove the young man mad.

Or so I gather, for I met him last

With four strange objects to his sleeve
attached ;

He said, " I may not be the soldier-caste,

But nowhere is my patriot spirit matched,
Of which these emblems eloquently speak,

" The coupons which I did not use last week."

MORAL

WHEN all the land was waking up to war
And thousands rushed to put a tunic on,
Young Jimmy sat in drinking-shops and swore
He'd be in civvies when the world had gone ;
He had no use for patriotic stuff,
And what was Belgium when a man had
beer ?

“ Just wait until they take you by the scruff,
But *never volunteer.*”

Yet next week saw him sweating with the rest,
Presenting arms and padding it for leagues ;
He did the rifle business with a zest,
But what he couldn't stomach was fatigues ;
Yet when the Sergeant wanted some one quick
Young Jimmy was the first to answer,
“ Here ! ”

Though afterwards he'd say it made him sick—
“ *Don't ever volunteer.*”

Young Jimmy was a terror at the Front
For digging jobs and bombing and patrols,
Though all along he said, “ A stunt's a stunt,
But don't go *asking* for a brace of holes.”

And then one night he tried too big a thing—
I saw him on his stretcher at the rear—
And what I think the lad was whispering
Was, "*Never volunteer.*"

Old soldiers sit and grumble in the barns
And tell their wisdom to the young men
round,
And this is all the burden of their yarns—
"Don't do a blessed thing until you're
bound";
But when there's something dirty to be done
It's wondrous how this wisdom disappears;
Of all the multitude I don't know one
Who *never volunteers.*

THE TIDE

TO THE ROYAL NAVAL DIVISION

APRIL, 1918.

THIS is a last year's map ;
I know it all so well,
Stream and gully and trench and sap,
Hamel and all that hell ;
See where the old lines wind ;
It seems but yesterday
We left them many a league behind
And put the map away.

“ Never again,” we said,
“ Shall we sit in the Kentish Caves ;
Never again will the night-mules tread
Over the Beaucourt graves ;
They shall have Peace,” we dreamed—
“ Peace and the quiet sun,”
And over the hills the French folk streamed
To live in the land we won.

But the Bosc has Beaucourt now ;
It is all as it used to be—
Airmen peppering Thiepval brow,
Death at the Danger Tree ;

The tired men bring their tools
And dig in the old holes there ;
The great shells spout in the Ancre pools,
The lights go up from Serre.

And the regiment came, they say,
Back to the selfsame land
And fought like men in the same old way
Where the cookers used to stand ;
And I know not what they thought
As they passed the Puisieux Road,
And over the ground where FREYBERG fought
The tide of the grey men flowed.

But I think they did not grieve,
Though they left by the old Bosch line
Many a cross they loathed to leave,
Many a mate of mine ;
I know that their eyes were brave,
I know that their lips were stern,
For these went back at the seventh wave,
But they wait for the tide to turn.

THE VOYAGE OF H.M.S. *PRESIDENT*

A DREAM

[Mr. Punch means no disrespect to H.M.S. *President*, which, being moored in the Thames off Bouverie Street, he has always looked upon as his guardship, but he has often wondered what would happen if only a few thousands of the officers and men borne on her books were to issue from the Admiralty and elsewhere—but especially from the Admiralty—and go on board their ship; hence the disquieting dream that follows.]

It was eighteen bells in the larboard watch
with a neap-tide running free,
And a gale blew out of the Ludgate Hills when
the *President* put to sea ;
An old mule came down Bouverie Street to
give her a helping hand,
And I didn't think much of the ship as such,
but the crew was something grand.

The bo'sun stood on a Hoxton bus and blew
the Luncheon Call,
And the ship's crew came from the four wide
winds, but chiefly from Whitehall ;
They came like the sand on a wind-swept strand,
like shots from a Maxim gun,
And the old mule stood with the tow-rope on
and said, " It can't be done."

With a glitter of wiggly braid they came, with
a clatter of forms and files,
The little A.P.'s they swarmed like bees, the
Commodores stretched for miles ;
Post-Captains came with hats in flame, and
Admirals by the ell,
And which of the lot was the biggest pot there
was never a man could tell.

They choked the staggering quarter-deck and
did the thing no good ;
They hung like tars on the mizzen-spars (or
those of the crowd that could) ;
Far out of view still streamed the queue when
the moke said, " Well, I'm blowed
If I'll compete with the 'ole damn Fleet," and
he pushed off down the road.

And the great ship she sailed after him, though
the Lord knows how she did,
With her gunwales getting a terrible wetting
and a brace of her stern sheets hid,
When up and spoke a sailor-bloke and he said,
" It strikes me queer,
And I've sailed the sea in the R.N.V. this five
and-forty year ;

" But a ship as can't 'old 'arf 'er crew, why,
what sort of a ship is 'er ?
And oo's in charge of the pore old barge if
dangers do occur ?

And I says to you, I says, ‘ Eave to, until this
point’s agreed ’ ; ”

And some said, “ Why ? ” and the rest, “ Ay,
ay,” but the mule he paid no heed.

So the old beast hauled and the Admirals
bawled and the crew they fought like cats,
And the ship went dropping along past Wapping
and down by the Plumstead Flats ;
But the rest of the horde that wasn’t aboard
they trotted along the bank,
Or jumped like frogs from the Isle of Dogs, or
fell in the stream and sank.

But while they went by the coast of Kent up
spoke an aged tar—

“ A joke’s a joke, but this ’ere moke is going a
bit too far ;

I can tell by the motion we’re nearing the ocean
—and *that’s* too far for me ” ;

But just as he spoke the tow-rope broke and
the ship sailed out to sea.

And somewhere out on the deep, no doubt,
they probe the problems through

Of who’s in charge of the poor old barge and
what they ought to do ;

And the great files flash and the docketts crash
and the inkwells smoke like sin,

While many a U-boat tells the tale how the
President did her in.

For many have tried to pierce her hide and
flung torpedoes at her,
But the vessel, they found, was barraged round
with a mile of paper matter ;
The whole sea swarms with Office Forms and
the U-boats stick like glue,
So nothing can touch the *President* much, for
nothing at all gets through.

.

But never, alack, will the ship come back, for
the *President* she's stuck too.

STORIES FOR CIVILIANS

THE FLY

HAVE I been at the Front !—O Lor' !
Was I over the bags ?—You bet.
They tell me I won the mouldy war
At the Battle of Nouvilette ;
The bombs was terrible thick
And the shells was mountain-high,
And many a Bosch went back to Base,
But I can't say much about what took place,
For *I* had a fly in my eye.

We were just getting up to Fritz
When the horrible thing occurred,
And bang in my eye the blighter sits,
The size of a well-fed bird ;
“ Come on,” the officer says ;
I says to him, “ ‘ By-and-by ’ ;
It's all very well to say, ‘ Come on ! ’
I would if my arms and legs were gone,
But *I've* got a fly in my eye.”

Have you been on a bicycle, sir,
And copped it proper the same,
When the world was only a misty blur
And your eye like a red-hot flame,

So that you wept great tears,
So that you longed to die ?
Well, think what it is when there happens to be
A battle you speecially came to see,
And *then* get a fly in your eye.

'They say as there ain't no doubt
What I ought to have gone and done—
Turned my upper lid inside out
And over the under one ;
But I tell you the bombs was thick,
And never a man said " Hi !
Just monkey about with your upper lid " ;
So I blew my nose and I wept, I did,
And I *still* had a fly in my eye.

And then, sir, I just went mad,
I groped for my trusty hyp,
And I laid about like a 'Tyneside lad
With a good blind circular swipe ;
They tell me I killed ten Huns
And laid out Corporal Fry ;
The Huns they took to their heels and fled,
And even the Company wished me dead,
And I *still* had a fly in my eye.

I fell on my poor old faee,
I lay in a hole and swore ;
And now they call me a shell-shoek case
And tell me I won the War ;

They gave me the D.C.M.,
And that's why I seem so shy.
But this is the truth I've told to you,
And you never can tell what a man won't do
With a darned great fly in his eye.

A SONG OF PLENTY.

The shelling's cruel bad, my son,
But don't you look too black,
For every blessed German one
He gets a dozen back—
But I remember the days
When shells were terrible few,
And never the guns could bark and blaze
The same as they do for you.
But they sat in the swamp behind, my boy,
and prayed for a tiny shell,
While Fritz, if he had the mind, my boy, could
give us a first-class hell ;
And I know that a 5.9 looks bad to a bit of a
London kid,
But I tell you you were a lucky lad to come out
when you did.

Plenty of sand-bags now, my son,
Plenty of good trench stores,
Plenty of wire to teach the Hun
To have these mouldy wars—
But I remember a day
When stores were terrible few,
And we'd nothing to keep the swine away
The same as there is for you.

Ditches then at the best, my boy, and a parapet
all in rags,
And many a man went West, my boy, for lack
of a few score bags ;
And it's all the same to an English lad that's
fighting for the KING,
But you ought to be just a trifle glad you've
plenty of everything.

Up in the line again, my son,
And dirty work, no doubt,
But when the dirty work is done
They'll take the Regiment out—
But I remember a day
When men were terrible few
And we hadn't reserves a mile away,
The same as there are for you ;
But fourteen days at a stretch, my boy, and
nothing about relief ;
Fight and carry and fetch, my boy, with rests
exceeding brief ;
And rotten as all things sometimes are, they're
not as they used to be,
And you ought to thank your lucky star you
didn't come out with me.

FATE

A SONG OF WISDOM

They tell you it ain't no good
A-wondering when you'll die,
Or lying low as a soldier should
When aereoplanes is by ;
F'or whether it comes in a sudden way
Or lingering, long and late,
You won't go under until the day
That's settled before by Fate.

Ah, well, and it may be true—
But the lads I like to see
Are the ones that do as they're told to do
And stay where they ought to be ;
For Fate may fix on a far-off date
And a death of an easy kind,
But it ain't no use *encouraging* Fate
To change her feminine mind.

So I keep my rifle clean,
And I use my eyes and ears,
And I don't go wandering off the scene
A-looking for sooveneers ;

And maybe the bullet that bears my name
Is meant for a distant day,
But I don't get playing the idiot game
When the other ones come my way.

I've been out many a day,
And seen too many a mate
With a leg or an arm blown clean away
By a thing he thought was Fate.
But when six men get playing about
With a rusty old bomb gone bad,
Then what is it knocks the six men out?—
Not Fate, but Folly, my lad.

And it's better alive than dead
You'll serve the old platoon,
So try to do as the officer said,
And not to die too soon.
Though a man can't add to his earthly span,
It's a thing worth trying to do,
You take good care of yourself, young man,
And Fate won't matter to you.

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